

in the range from 0.1% to 5% greater than the distance between opposed surfaces of the headers:

(c) a pump in fluid communication with said lumens of said membranes through at least one permeate collection means, said pump operable to apply a suction to the lumens of the membranes to draw a component of the substrate as permeate through said membranes while leaving particulate matter in said substrate; and

(d) aeration means having through-passages with openings, distributed both radially and circumferentially within the skein for discharging air directly into the substrate near the base of the skein, the openings providing a column of bubbles rising from near said outsides of said membranes' lower ends.

(Add the following claims:)

16. The system of claim 15 wherein the length is in the range from 0.1% to 1% greater than the distance between the opposed surfaces of the headers.

17. The system of claim 16 wherein the aeration means includes a rigid air supply tube for carrying air to the through-passages and for spacing and positioning the lower and upper headers relative to one another.

18. The system of claim 17 wherein the air supply tube has additional through-passages along its length.

#### REMARKS

Support for amendments to the claims 15, and 16 - 18 is found in the specification as follows:

basis in claim 15 for "each fiber having a length greater than 0.5 m," is:

Because, a header secures at least 10, preferably from 50 to 50,000 fibers, each generally at least 0.5 m long, in a skein, it provides a high